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March 31, 1966

Mr. Alfred Friendly
Managing Editor
The Washington Post
1515 L. St., nw
Washington, D.C.

Dear Mr. Friendly,

With a mystery that has by now become the norm of my life, your letter of six days ago, postmarked the day it was written, has just arrived. I am replying in haste because of what will become clear to you if you accept my challenge of six weeks ago. And I herewith renew and amplify that challenge.

You say that if I "could demonstrate that circumstances of the murder and the nature of the investigation were different in major degree from those we have been led to believe" I "would not have merely an interesting account but the most sensational story since the assassination itself. Any publisher who provided" me " the vehicle for such a demonstration would be showered with riches and honor." I am in complete accord, which makes my incredible experience so shocking to me and incomprehensible to you.

Yet, with the value this could have to a newspaper, with syndication rights available, you will not personally make the simple gesture required to see for yourself whether or not I have what I say? You will not, for your own responsibility as a journalist and an editor, for your obligations to the owners of your paper if not, indeed, to history, let me prove it, simply and to you.

We begin with the knowledge you refused to credit Congressman Rathbiss. From there we go to Larry Stern, who in ten weeks read not the several hundred pages you report but 47 (he left his marker in place). I am willing to let you tie up my ribbon copy for this period of time, but you were unwilling to read the book. By even your own statement, Stern barely began it. Now I will go further. I offer to give you the names and phone numbers of the not inconsiderable number of senior and executive editors of important houses, men of maturity and responsibility, who have in writing represented this book as I do, singling out for praise just those things you seem to question. Or, in confidence, I will show you the letters.

Further, you can, without leaving your building, ask Anthony Howard of the London Observer, to whom I have just placed a call, as I did to you. I haven't asked his permission, but I am confident he will not mind. Or Tom Wicker, of whom the same is true. Or Alain Clement, of Le Monde (338-2450). I can give you more if these do not suit. And I can show you. I dare you accept my challenge. I dare you grant me as little as five minutes and as much thereafter as you want. I am putting it on the line, Mr. Friendly. Dare you?

I intend no harshness. The inferences you draw are logical and reasonable. They have but a single fault: they are wrong. Let me prove it to you. You are not too busy for five minutes. I will put into your hands a single document that will be all you require, and I suggest that it will also hold further interest for The Washington Post than the obvious one.

In giving you the names of responsible journalists who have, in confidence, read my book I am not losing sight of the significance, to me, of your refusal to believe Mac, who is a responsible Congressman and a Member of the Judiciary Committee. We all had and have a tremenduous personal involvement in this tragic and traumatic event, I in my way, you in yours. And I can well understand the position of your paper and its owners. But Wicker, Howard and Clement are reputable, knowledgeable and skeptical members of your own craft. Dare you ask them if they think you'd waste your time reading my book?

The reservation is unchanged: respect my confidence. I have done what I believe to be an important thing (would you like to see the handwritten note of an executive of a major publishing house who called it both important and historic?) and something of, as you say, great value. I am broke and in debt and need what my really great labor should return.

To demonstrate my responsibility in this matter, I tell you I can have this book in distribution in a week and have not done so. Further, I will prove this to you. So, it should be clear I do not seek more sensation. I seek responsible handling.

The climate is changing. I am now for the first time hopeful of a contract in the near future. I have no doubt that the interest of a major paper such as the Post would greatly facilitate that. I likewise have no doubt that the syndication rights represent both an honor and a commercial value.

And I suggest that because there is now no possibility of doubt that I am right beyond question, the urgency is even greater.

Consider what is at stake here, what it means to the country, and what it will mean to you and your paper if, as I guarantee to prove to your complete satisfaction, I have understated to you. Or consider what you will feel when, as inevitably it will, this all comes out - without you.

I am dealing with you openly and in trust. I hope I may depend upon your for the traditional reciprocation. If I can do what I intend today, I will leave this in your office tonight. Assuming there are no further needs that I see in the immediate future, I promise to be in your office, completely armed, within 75 minutes of your phone call.

Sincerely,

Harold Weisberg